

LIBERATOR

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Vol 9 No 8

AUGUST 1969 35c

Not As Beggars
Editorial

The Separatists' Fig Tree

Creeping Racism in England

Of Acidia
a short story

Movie Review
CLAYTON RILEY

Richard Ward



LIBERATOR

Vol 9 No 8 August 1969

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LIBERATOR is published monthly by the Afro-American Research Institute, Inc. 244 East 46 Street, New York, N. Y., 10017

Subscription Prices: Within Continental United States:

Single Copy: 35¢, 1 year \$3.00
2 years \$5.50

Foreign surface Mail: 1 year \$6.00

Foreign air mail: 1 year \$13.00

All manuscripts, letters, subscription orders, changes of address should be sent to **LIBERATOR**, 244 East 46 Street, N.Y., N.Y., 10017
Tel: YUkon 6-5939, area code 212
Advertising Rates Sent Upon Request



Daniel H. Watts
editor-in-chief

EDITORS

Richard Gibson

Africa, Asia and Europe

Clayton Riley

Arts

STAFF

Evelyn B. Kalibala

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Tom Feelings

Illustrator

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Cover photo: Bert Andrews

Not As Beggars

"Pride goeth before the fall"

While a large segment of mankind on the morning of July 16th watched Apollo 11 begin its epic journey to the moon, a handful of negroes completely removed from the social, political and economic significance of the flight appeared at the launching site in their all-too-familiar role of begging the Great White Father for a handout. What were these descendants of warrior kings doing on their knees begging for bread? Where was the soul and courage of our philosopher-inventor-artisan ancestors who once brought "civilization" to the far shores of the world? Where were *we*, brothers?

We know where whitey is. This "dumb white man" that we, the *hip* ones, have been running the game on with our anti-poverty hustles and foundation grant give-a-ways has actually escaped the chains of gravity-bound earth and taken that "first small step" toward embracing the entire universe. While we Afro-Americans cannot even get two nickels to rub together to help another brother to cross the street. Now, just who has been running the game on whom? Astronauts Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin didn't make it by rapping out irrelevant slogans, but by taking care of business, real business, the business of mankind.

Meanwhile, the slick/sick hung-up white liberals from the safe confines of their neon-lighted lily-white pads in Scarsdale ramble on about how the space money should have been used to improve the lot of the poor downtrodden negroes in the ghettos -- ignoring, of course, both that their self-appointed jobs of negro-watching would be in jeopardy if the poor negro should stop begging, and that the countless millions, even billions, *already* poured into the ghettos in the last ten years have resulted in no real improvements. It's a matter of *purpose, intent*, and until this is changed, the amount of money expended, whether large or small, makes no difference.

But negroes like the good Rev. Ralph Abernathy of SCLC continue to pander to the entertainment needs of whites by holding their vigils, knee-downs, and other forms of negro supplication for the delight of the little charlies in up-South Westchester County. To these negroes, the success of the Apollo 11 men on the moon should point up once and for all the fact that when white America decides to put its creative and natural resources to bear on a top priority goal, it can and does succeed.

It was only little more than eight years after the late President Kennedy made the American commitment to place a man on the moon and return him safely that this goal was reached with the Apollo 11 space flight. It has been one hundred and seven years since the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation and America's commitment to social justice for Afro-Americans, and still many of us wait, and wait...and wait....

The message of white America's commitments and priorities must be clear to us now: Our *begging* for what is rightfully ours is not the way; we must either *take* what we need, or *build* the institutions to guarantee our survival.

"The roots of the present lie deep in the past--and nothing is lost to the man who would know how the present comes to be what it is."

-- DANIEL H. WATTS



President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.

united nations

the

PETER HARATY

Many years ago, in Gikuyu-Ini, which the white man calls Kikuyu-land, a wise man, a prophet, foretold the coming of people dressed like butterflies, in many colors, who would subjugate the people, build the railroads and take the people's land away. Years passed, the British came, and all his prophecies but two were fulfilled. One of these was that a certain fig tree, known to the people, would one day fall and the invaders would be driven out. The British administrators of the Kenya Protectorate laughed at this, for, though the tree was old, fig trees live for hundreds of years and there

was no reason this one should be allowed to fall. But one day it did begin to wither and die, so the British brought in agronomists, tree surgeons, fertilizer experts, and sweated and groaned over that single tree ("the 'natives' were such a superstitious lot"). Fertilizers and water were forced into it, guy lines were attached, props were set up -- Western technology was determined to save that tree. But the tree fell. It fell through the well-engineered guy lines, through the poles and props. It fell thunderously to the ground, and British rule in Kenya soon followed suit.

The other prediction was couched

in such forceful language, and with such fearful implications, that most Kenyans preferred to forget it. After Uhuru, the sage had said, the people would turn on each other like wild dogs gone mad. Surely, the people had replied, this will not come to pass, for we will have what we fought for -- freedom. But today, Kenya, the first Black African country to win independence through a bloody liberation struggle, is rapidly becoming two nations -- one Black and rich, the other Black and poor -- thanks in great measure to the economic "aid" of the U.S. The peasants who threw out the British now see all

separatists' fig tree

they fought for being put to one side, and feel the threat that extreme famine will grip the Third World by 1975 hanging menacingly over their heads.

The histories of Kenya and other "independent" Black African states have much to say to Black Separatists and Nationalists in America, for the majority of our Black revolutionaries are repeating their African brothers' most damaging mistake. Envisioning very little beyond the day of independence, they are continuing to think only in terms of how and when an independent Black state or states are to be set up, and not

of how the *economy* is to be organized, not only internally, but in relation to the rest of the world.

And, after Uhuru...what? James Ngugi, in his novel *A Grain of Wheat*, recounts an incident in which an ex-Mau Mau sets out the day before Uhuru ceremonies to buy the plantation of a frightened European who is leaving the country. He is to buy it in the name of a co-operative of poor villagers, but when he arrives he finds the property has already changed hands and now belongs to a rich Kenyan who has been busily buying up such property for months. The villager thinks to himself: "Uhuru

has brought the land into African hands. And has that made a difference to the small man in the village?" Obviously it has not, and unless a precise, coherent, and enunciated economic program is formulated beforehand, it will make no difference to Afro-Americans once the euphoria has worn off.

Only fairly recently have Black militant groups begun to think in economic terms, if only for the purposes of financing the revolution. Most of these demands for money have taken the form of what the Episcopal Bishop for Vermont, for one, calls "dramatizations of the

cont next pg

"Kenya is rapidly becoming two nations.-- one Black and rich, the other Black and poor."

need for charity," or in the form of demands for reparations. In response to the growing demands by James Forman for reparations from white churches, by welfare mothers for more humane systems, by the Republic of New Africa for land, by the Black Panther Party for a Black plebiscite, the apologists of the white power structure have advanced a number of arguments which say that such demands are unfair because: (1) they place the burden for rehabilitating the ex-slave precisely on that section of the country which was most innocent of the guilt and which indeed was instrumental in abolishing the system which "degraded" the Black American; (2) the sins of the father should not be visited upon the children; and even (3) the balance has already been expended in the destruction done to American cities in the last four or five years.

What these spokesmen offer instead is a mirage they call, variously, Green Power, Black Capitalism, or Pulling Yourself Up By Your Bootstraps, all of which allow you to Do Your Thing and Get a Piece of the Action. As an example of this kind of thinking, James Ridgeway, in *The Closed Corporation*, describes a comic book distributed in the ghettos by the Department of Labor. "They are peopled with characters who look like rather dark models in Jantzen swimsuit ads. And they all speak with what McClelland's people consider to be jive talk. One of them, a sharp-looking fellow, is getting out of a new car to shoot the breeze with his old pals at the billiard parlor, all of whom are made to appear down and out. As he approaches, he says: 'Power is green, baby!' and then goes on to drive home



The late Tom Mboya, a Luo.



President Kenyatta's strongest single political opponent, Oginga Odinga, a Luo.

the point that you can get green power by going to your nearest employment office and getting some skilled training. Halfway through, another character asks: 'What about prejudice, man? You know what I mean, suppose you're Black!' The answer to this is: 'The Man needs help! You'd be surprised how unprejudiced he gets when you got something his

business needs. *Green is a powerful color, too, baby!*' And then: *'Make your own power and make it green.'* You, too, can become a part of the system.

Although to most people, who have a limited knowledge of history, these seem compelling arguments and alternatives, they are in reality cynical manipulations of facts and



James Forman protests racism in the churches by standing during services at Riverside Church, New York City.

Alan Mercer

dead-end choices. Slavery was practiced in all the original thirteen colonies to varying degrees. In the 1890's, a stone wall built by slave labor was still pointed out as a tourist attraction in Malden, Massachusetts. Slaves worked on the fortifications for the Dutch in New Amsterdam when the English lay siege to what became the colony of

New York. In short, slaves were used in the North the same way they were used in the South--to do work that free white men wouldn't do, or would demand too much in wages for. The fact that the economic situation in the North changed to such a degree that slavery became for the most part unprofitable is hardly an endorsement of the North's commitment to

.....
 "...the psychologies
 of the middle-level
 executive for IBM
 and the Harlem pimp
 are the same."

equality for all.

Philip S. Foner points out in his *Business and Slavery* that the Northern merchant and the Southern planter played mutually supportive roles, and that the fortunes derived first from the slave-selling and shipbuilding enterprises of the coastal states, then from the insurance, banking, and trading in tobacco and cotton of the New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut capitalists, provided the investment capital needed to provender the Union Army with rotten meat, shoddy clothing, blankets and other profitable items, which in turn opened the way for the oil and railroad monopolies of the 70's and 80's. For the North to deny any benefit, direct or indirect, from slavery is a monstrous perversion of history.

From the 1860's until the 1920's, the North was willing to let the Black man be the South's problem. The Hayes-Tilden compromise, which allowed the Republican candidate to take over the White House in return for letting the Democratic South take over the Black man, settled the matter of who would be allowed to exploit the Afro-American. During the 70's, 80's, and 90's, there were Chinese and Japanese to work on the railroads, there were Irish, German, Polish and Jewish immigrants to sweat in the factories and mills of the East, and as each successive wave of foreigners petered out, new ones came to take their place until the quota and exclusion acts of the 20's. Then the "humanitarian" North, beset with a dwindling supply of exploitable bond servants, and expanding foreign markets, suddenly rediscovered the rural peasant of the South.

It should be obvious from this that

cont next pg

the Afro-American has always been not a second-class citizen, unjustly deprived of his rights, but a colonial subject. The fact that there are Black men and women sprinkled throughout the administration of the system does not alter the situation -- the French colonial system encouraged this, and the British tolerated it to a certain level. But in all cases, the colonized was the object of exploitation, and there was never any intent to make the colony a self-sufficient nation.

The myth of citizenship was a master stroke which kept Black Americans from realizing that they were colonial subjects within America, and that they had no value to America except for their labor and their use as psychological scapegoats. White America's alternating periods of apparent concern for the Black man and periods of very real apathy for his problems are only the logical devices of a colonizer dealing with his subject during periods of possible rebellion and periods of despair. A Gikuyu pyrethrum picker could more easily see through the measures taken by the government against a White Highlands planter for barbarous treatment to his workers when Mau Mau was in the offing than a Black unskilled worker today can see the motives behind the drive of the U.S. Government for a minimum wage when rebellion and unrest are rife in the labor movement. The Gikuyu recognized the move as a device to keep him from getting his tribal land back, while the Black worker is more inclined to see it as another guarantee that he may one day be a full citizen.

If Black Capitalism were to be instituted and promoted, it would be just about as successful as the Alliance for Progress has been in eradicating poverty in Latin America, and for the same reasons. The American economic system has reached such a stage of development that it is incapable of reforming itself

in any meaningful way. All it can do is convert the monies made available for reform to more of the old-style exploitation, and it counts on the promises it has made and the psychological conditioning of the people to keep them waiting for their crack at being the exploiter, since the poor, Black or white, have the same culture as the oppressor class, and the same desire for the only kind of "good life" that they have been exposed to. Unless the Separatists can offer a radically different and infinitely more meaningful form of economic life, they cannot hope to attract the Black masses away from the scuffle for the sugar teat of Black Capitalism.

The insidious aspect of Black Capitalism is that it exploits the basic psychological drives that have been built into the personalities of all citizens and subjects of America. This explains the phenomenon of the hustler, whose goals are the same as the white middle-class businessman or professional -- money for self-expression. The means used are radically different, and the life-styles even more so, but stripped of these externals, the psychologies of the middle-level executive for IBM and the Harlem pimp are the same. Both are profit-motivated, self-centered, and enjoy manipulating peoples especially against their own best interests and desires. It is not hard to imagine government, if it were serious about Black Capitalism, mounting a two-pronged attack on the ghetto, one manifestation being a stringent campaign against numbers, prostitution, pushing, and the other illegal sources of income, and the offering of small business management as an attractive alternative to what would now be an extremely dangerous and unprofitable enterprise.

This approach would have at least two advantages -- it would provide more easily taxed businesses, and

would least disrupt the system now existing, and thus least disturb the majority population in the mother country. The poor would continue to be exploited, the aggressive, ambitious, intelligent, acquisitive, and ruthless would still be allowed an outlet for their drives, and they would not have to make any great psychological adjustment in their essential mental apparatus. But white capitalism would have to admit too much about itself, too openly, to buy this plan, even if it were inclined to expend that much capital and planning.

Quite possibly Tom Mboya, who had become quite deeply involved with CIA-financed economic programs before his death, was saying more than he seemed to be when he urged Afro-Americans to fight for liberation here rather than come to Africa. And he may have been expressing something more than a pious platitude when he said no Black men could be free, Africa would not be free, until Black men were free everywhere. And could Black men be free in a Republic of New Africa while the U.S. economic juggernaut continued intact? If Ghana cannot be free, if Botswana cannot be free, how could a state of Harlem be free? Wouldn't the logic of imperialism force the U.S. to continue its relation with the ex-slaves in very much the same terms after the "independence" of the Black Republic?

Political independence, as desirable as that is in itself, is not going to be meaningful in the long run unless the economic system of the mother country is changed basically, not reformed or even greatly weakened. The American fig tree that must come down is not merely political domination, but all possibility of neo-colonialism, or the day of tearing and rending will come not only for the Gikuyu but for every people subject to the direct or indirect rule of the U.S.

a poem for my father

how sad it must be
to love so many women
to need so many black
perfumed bodies weeping
underneath you.

when i remember all those nights
i filled my mind with
long wars between short
sighted trojans & greeks
while you slapped some
wide hips about in
your pvt dungeon,
when i remember your
deformity i want to
do something about your
makeshift manhood.

i guess
that is why
on meeting your sixth
wife, i cross myself
with her confessionals.

-- sonia sanchez

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Creeping Racism in England

LOUIS KUSHNICK

The race situation in Britain has seemingly settled down following the public controversy surrounding the racist speech of Enoch Powell. The pro- and anti-Powell marchers have gone home, the Government has moved further to the right on immigration restriction to match the rightward movement of the Conservative leadership, and Britain is accustoming itself to the fact that, like it or not, it is now a multiracial society. This realization has been a long time coming and is even now yet to be completely accepted -- witness the dangerous nonsense of Powell's call for schemes for voluntary repatriation of non-white immigrants.

The political atmosphere within which the Government is working in this area has been so poisoned by right-wing pressure and the constant movement rightward in immigration control by the leaders of both parties that many of the essential ingredients for the creation of a peaceful and productive multiracial society are not present. Political leadership, for example, is absolutely essential if dangerous stereotypes, scapegoating and prejudice are to be

countered. But this leadership unfortunately has not been forthcoming. After Enoch Powell made his bombshell speech on April 20, 1968, in which he spoke about "rivers of blood," it took the Prime Minister until May 5th to speak out. And the Home Secretary, James Callaghan, ten days after the speech, in a major television show, talked about "our people" and "them" and defended the Government against Powell's voluntary repatriation scheme with the hurt cry that the Government, too, had such a plan.

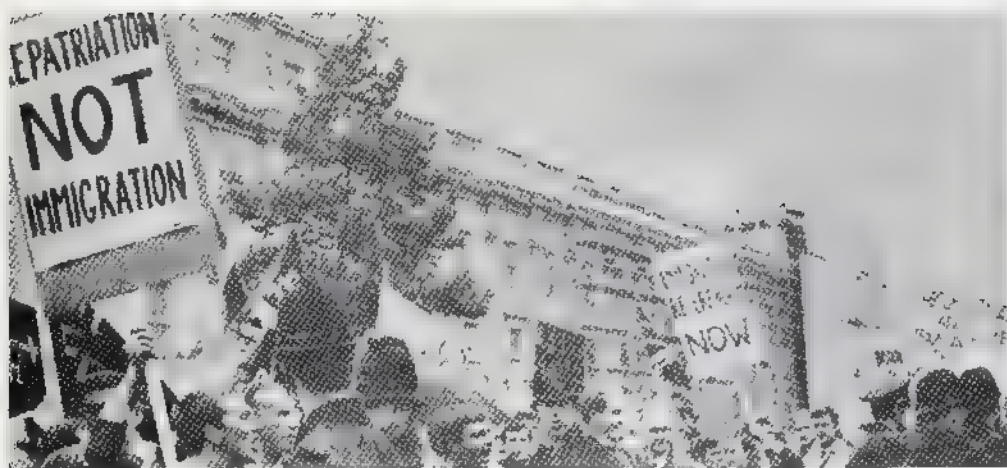
The development of scapegoating, of blaming the non-white immigrants for shortcomings in the social services and overcrowded housing is one of the worst aspects of the present situation. To combat it, not only must the political leaders educate the public about the facts -- that these shortcomings existed long before the arrival of the immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian sub-Continent -- which they haven't done, but they must also introduce major programs to combat these inadequacies. Despite statements in favor of such programs when in opposition, the Labour Government has done little in this area. The Home Secretary during the Parliamentary debate on the Race Relations Bill of

Prime Minister Harold Wilson: "A long silence...."



united nations

Louis Kushnick is a Lecturer with the Department of American Studies, University of Manchester, England.



Advocates of opposing views meet near Downing Street.

1968 -- an antidiscrimination bill -- pointed with pride to the expenditure of \$7.2 million in areas with especially large concentrations of non-white immigrants. This figure loses some of its glamor when one realizes that it was divided among 52 local authorities involving an average grant of about \$140,000 for each one -- hardly a princely sum. Since then, the Government has announced, and introduced in Parliament, a means to spend between \$48 million and \$60 million over the next four to five years, to be spread among twenty areas -- with concentration of immigrants being only one criterion for the grant.

In this situation, the Race Relations Act of 1968 which outlaws discrimination in jobs, housing, education, credit and insurance, and public accommodations may not be as effective as its sponsors had hoped. This law, based in part on the American antidiscrimination laws, has many of the same weaknesses which have hindered the effectiveness of those American laws for the past twenty years.

If the American experience teaches us anything, it is that it is not much good to pass a law which either is unenforceable or unenforced. The situation in the United States, where studies have shown patterns of discrimination to be just as widespread and entrenched after twenty years of legislation as they were before the passage of such legislation, should warn us to be wary of expecting

people to obey the law merely because it is the law.

Yet, this is precisely one of the major assumptions underlying the legislation in Britain. They are assuming that it is a small problem -- two per cent of the total population, about one million non-white immigrants -- of recent origin, since the 1950's, and that the British people are law-abiding and that therefore the mere passage of an antidiscrimination law will lead most people to obey it. This, of course, is an arguable assumption, and no matter how small a percentage of the population non-whites may be, or how recently they have arrived, discrimination against these immigrants is widespread.

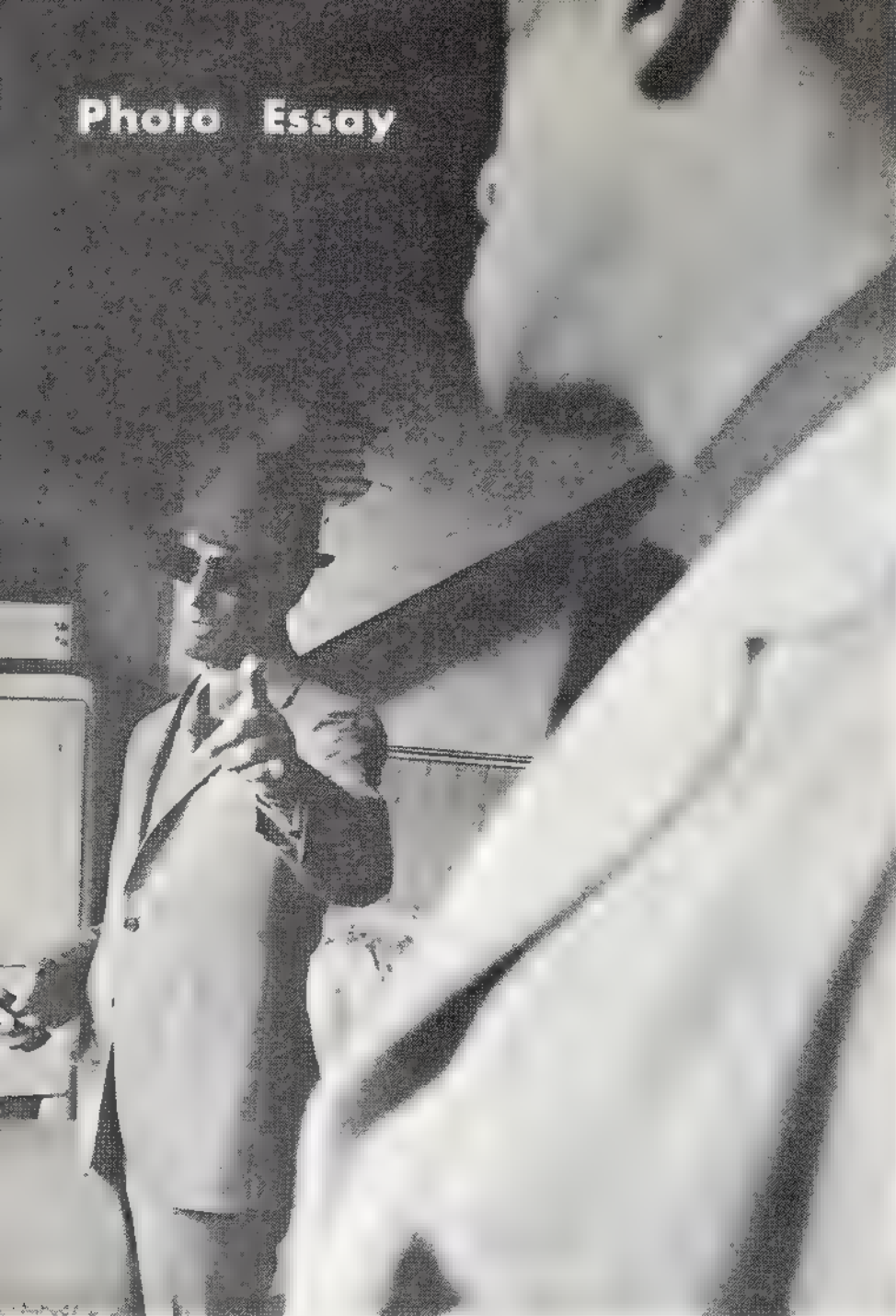
A recent major study of discrimination found that "discrimination in employment is the biggest single criticism in immigrants...it is the area in which the greatest number of individual claims of discrimination were made." Thirty-six per cent of the respondents claimed to have personally experienced discrimination and an additional sixteen per cent were "uncertain about the existence of discrimination." In addition, fifteen per cent had avoided the possibility of experiencing discrimination by going only to firms they knew or thought would employ them. Blacks who leave school are finding it more difficult to get the jobs they want and are qualified for and apprenticeships than whites. Ghettos are forming and some local authorities are

rehousing non-white immigrants in the least desirable properties near the city centers, near other non-white immigrants.

The measures designed to deal with the situation rely heavily on conciliation and persuasion and are weak in terms of enforcement. The Race Relations Board, for example, does not have subpoena powers, and while thus far they feel that they have not been hampered by this they may be when they come up against difficult cases. Since the Act came into force at the end of November 1968, most of the complaints have come against firms already employing non-white immigrants and not against the hard-core discriminators. The Act does not provide for any meaningful redress for the complainant, for neither the Race Relations Board nor the courts can order the discriminator, *even after discrimination has been proved*, to hire the complainant, or even offer him the next available job. They cannot order the firm to undertake positive steps to improve hiring practices, to broaden their recruitment procedures or to keep records and file reports on compliance with the Board. All the courts can do is issue a negative injunction telling the company not to discriminate in the future and to order the payment of damages -- most likely to be minimal and irrelevant -- to the complainant.

If this law is to have a meaningful impact on changing patterns of discrimination, much will depend on the determination of those implementing the law. In the absence of political leadership and major programs to improve social conditions, their job will be doubly difficult and there is a question as to the faith of the immigrant communities in the sincerity of the Government and its agencies in this area. Britain doesn't have as much time as many of its political leaders think it has to deal with this problem. If they fail to take the necessary steps in the near future, they may well find themselves with a problem much more entrenched and much more difficult to solve -- and with the possibility of violence and disorder looming over the horizon.

Photo Essay



Carl Lee (l), Antonio Fargas

Ceremonies in Dark Old Men

photos by BERT ANDREWS

"...there is no time that belongs on a clock and vacation is when you feel it. Lonne Elder III telling you so quietly you almost fail to hear that thieves are better human beings than the men whose hearts are broken daily pushing dress carts for coolie wages.

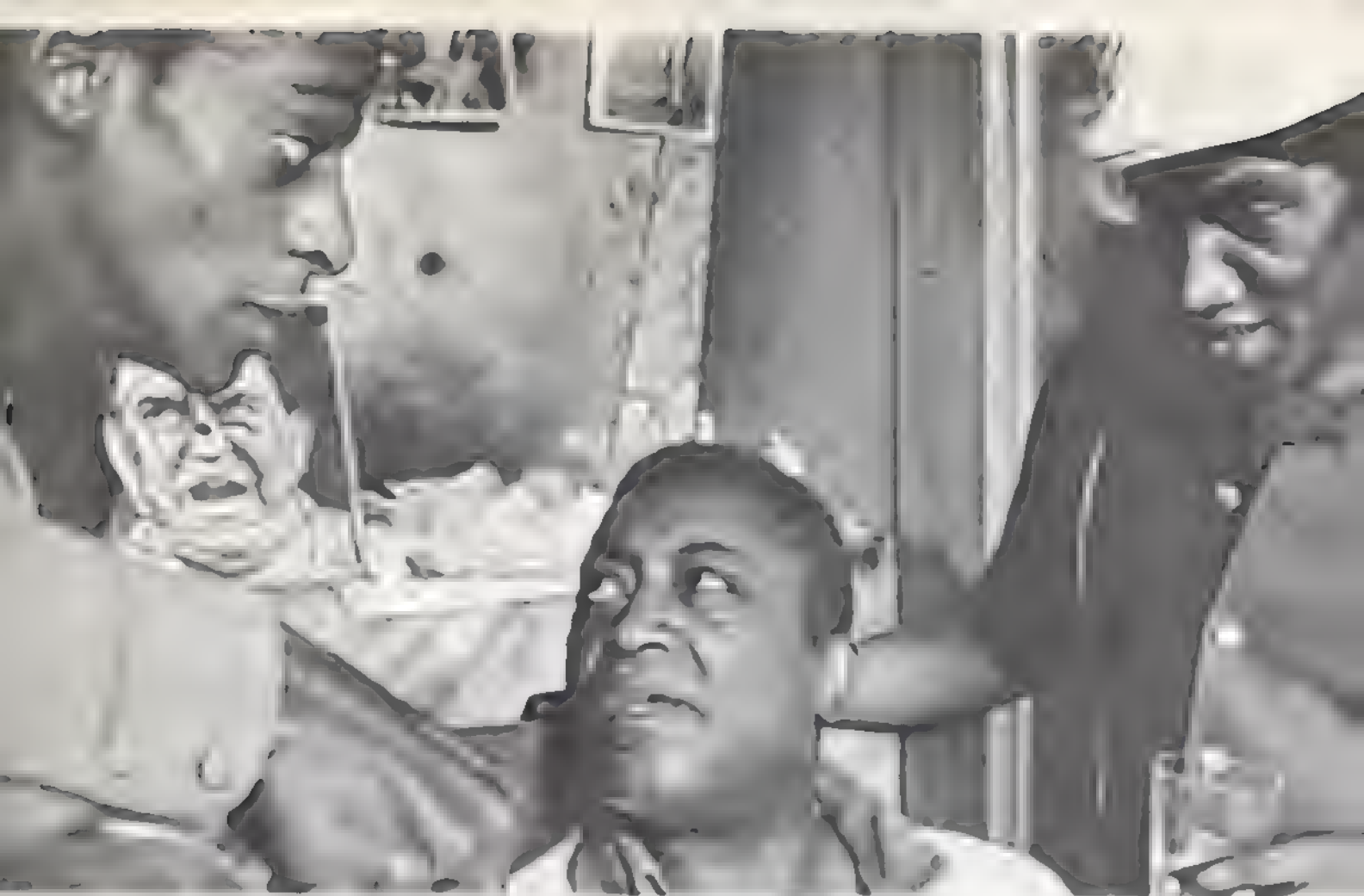
So it is that they become the nation's dishonored aristocrats, these crazy niggers, unemployed and unemployable; our street Blood hanging in there with sharp eyes, quick hands, and a bountiful possession of style."

"...a great deal of truth and beauty and craft by a brilliant playwright."

Clayton Riley

(l to r) Bette Howard, Freeman Roberts, Richard W





Antonio Fargas, Richard Ward, Freeman Roberts

Ward, Antonio Fargas



Celestine Barberight and Richard Ward



OF ACIDIA

EDGAR WHITE

The Death of the Mind

It will be over soon. They have told me. But they have lied before. Stationed here, such as I am, half-naked, carnal, well used and operative.

You see, I make these buttons. These various buttons. Oh, I don't really make them; the other fellow, Thomas, makes them. I only put the holes in these copious and multivarious buttons. It is important in the hole-making process to provide equidistance between orifices. Always with a mind toward the end function which is, of course, the sewing on (or, better, sew-ability) of each button for a garment.

I have not always been thus employed. I once did something else terribly exciting and meritorious. Of late, though, I have forgotten what it was I did. I do remember a car being involved, a very large car.

Thomas lives downstairs. Thomas has always lived downstairs. Often he comes up to see me. When he comes in, then he is upstairs along with me. We speak of buttons. He and I fear a far too presbyopic scope. He speaks only of the circular button, in terms of completion, in terms of utility. He forgets my part of the operation. He cares little for my craft.

Conor lives across from my back window. I can speak to him through my window. Every morning I speak to him through the window. He is kind. I think I remember him to be kind, and sullen. Thomas is more optimistic. Thomas is much younger, thus much more active.

Conor (who is kind) is a painter. Conor paints still-life portraits of walls and doors. Since Conor has but his four walls and one door, he seldom gets sales. But Conor still paints, so it's quite all right.

Conor complains of the heat of summer. Heat robs him of the energy to paint. So he sits before a white canvas. Winter is too cold--its colors too bleak. So he sits before his white canvas. Between four walls, a door, and the window.

Ellen comes into my room. She does not knock. No one knocks on my door; they merely come in. I do not know what I would do if someone knocked. It would present me with a new maze, another labyrinthine series of possibilities. I would have to open or not open. Or respond and not open. Or open without answering...or....

Ellen comes into my room. Without knocking. She bends over my body bringing her perfume over me, in such a way that it opens me. Then she puts her mouth and her kiss deep into me.

Ellen is warm in all her body. The bed springs squeak, sounding like cormorants from the end of the

sea. She takes me away from buttons.

Ellen leaves after. Closing the door carefully behind her (I hate drafts so). I rise from the bed and go to the window. It is the right time of day to speak to Conor. Always I ask the same thing. I speak to him in the vocative. He likes that. Conor is kind.

"Oh Conor, Conor, good fellow."

He answers, "Yes, Sorel, I hear you. Can you hear me, Sorel?"

I answer, "Yes, Conor, I hear you."

He answers, "Good, then I guess we can hear each other."

I ask, "How is the painting coming?"

He answers, "Not too well. If only it weren't so damn hot."

I answer, "Yes, it is very hot today."

He asks, "Do you think it will be so hot tomorrow?"

I answer, "No, I don't think it will be very hot tomorrow. Not as hot as today."

He asks, "How are the buttons coming?"

I answer, "Very well, very well. One can't complain, you know."

He answers, "Yes, yes, you're right. One can't complain."

He asks, "Did Ellen come?"

I answer, "Yes, she came."

He answers, "Oh. Good. Well, good-bye, must concentrate."

I answer, "Good-bye, Conor."

I once asked Conor if he knew his name was Latin. I wondered if his father spoke Latin. He said his father did not speak Latin. His father did not name him. His mother named him. She named him Conor because her brother's name was Conor. That made sense.

Ellen was gone. I had spoken to Conor. I had to return to my buttons. What was bothering me (things seldom bother me now, I am usually quite absent, quite seminal) was the fact that eventually these buttons would have to be delivered to the Man Incharge. It is my job, the second part of my job, to deliver them to the Man Incharge. It is he who receives the holed buttons and in turn takes them to the heads of departments before they reach their ultimate ends. He pays me. I had to go eventually.

It should not bother me. I have done this many times before. Little bothers me these days. One feels absent. One feels seminal. Really I think it is the travel which bothers me. I will have to go out of the door. It will be hot out there. Or cold. There will be others about. I will have to take the subway. What is more absurd than that subterranean locomotion? What is more painful? Stumbling as I will among those vacant faces. Those vacant and distrustful faces. My knees weakening

beneath me. Perhaps it can wait until tomorrow. It will not be quite so difficult tomorrow.

Thomas comes through the door. Observes me. Asks out of his mouth, "Do you know the time?"

"No, Thomas, I do not know the time. Why do you want to know?"

"Just wondered what time it was, that's all." Thomas places hands in pocket to seem becalmed. "Ellen come today?"

"Yes, Thomas, Ellen came. Why do you always wonder about Ellen? Why does everyone wonder about Ellen?"

"I just don't understand what she sees in you."

Thomas is rude. Thomas is unkind. But Conor is kind; thus, there is no reason for Thomas also to be kind.

"Perhaps she likes my mind, Thomas."

"Your mind? You have no mind."

Thomas is right. I had forgotten I had no mind.

II

The Death of the Lungs

Item: two slim slices of toast, unbuttered.

Item: one unused teabag.

Conclusion: Lunch.

Today, this morning after waking, after sleeping, I found I could no longer talk. As to whether it is a malady of the vocal chords or of the lungs I am uncertain. I cannot bear the uncertainty; I shall therefore call it a malady of the lungs. My lungs, insofar as they are the respiratory organs of my body, have achieved a state of perishment. My other and various members, however, not being in a state of juvenile avarice for totality (namely, "if he won't play I won't play") have continued.

I now have eaten of the bread and drunk of the tea. I am for all external purposes flourishing.

Thomas was unsympathetic. Thomas had to be unsympathetic. Conor, however, understood. He was sympathetic.

Ellen came early today. She did not notice my frailty. She withdrew with some calmness and purpose my quiet and flaccid member. Bringing it to consciousness, she was pleased. I believe I remember being pleased. Hence we must both have been pleased. Odd though, today for the first time I wanted to speak to her in some way. I mean, I remember my lips were moving foolishly, as when one quivers. I tried to press out a symbol with my fingers along her palm.

God, I was frightened. I have not been frightened for such a long time. But the movement I was making, this squirming that she could not know, frightened me.

cont next pg

As when I was very small. Trying to call out from nightmares. But they too could not hear.

Waiting and again waiting. Ellen pressing back the skin of my small thing. The eye of it looking out, and there was some comfort then, I think. Backward and forward, somewhat like being born, like wave riding.

Odd of the lungs to have quit me. A desertion in the ranks of synergy. If I just lie here, if I can just lie here, feeling the folds of the bedspread beneath me, all will be fine. If I pretend that I will not ever have to leave, ever have to stand erect before them... But that's impossible -- the loss of the lungs is nothing to them. It's my hands they care about, the incurving tentacles that make buttons.

The lungs are part of the divine synergy of the body. I remember being told that by a young theology student. He was well-versed in Aquinas. He spoke of the machine that is the body. The lungs giving the force which allows the sacred uttering of words. It does not matter; I have no words, anyway. Oftentimes I thought I had words, but the folly soon passed.

It is not so bad in the fall. Trees wither -- I am not alone. My withering is unnoticed among so much withering. Men build bonfires to keep away the frost. Perhaps to keep away those demented faces which always form in the dark seasons. Those faces carved out, or carved in, on pumpkins or snowmen.

When I was a child I lived in a gray house, and made love to a girl of my equal age. I made water inside her when I came. And my knees were quite weak and my head buzzed. It is important that you know this. Perhaps it will help you to understand. Perhaps it will help you to think you understand. Boethius means comforter. I am not Boethius; I am Sorel. It is important too that one retains identity. One is certain of so little in this place.

This morning I thought. I was thinking that perhaps it was not my lung that had died but perhaps another's. Maybe Conor's or Thomas'. But my lungs are inside of me. For all my thinking I could not give them to another. So much for thinking.

I try so hard to get my tongue far into Ellen's mouth, but I never get it far enough. I want to lose it in there.

I never questioned Ellen about her family. And now it is too late; I can't speak any longer. I only care about her mother, though, I think. I would like to copulate with her mother. That way I would have her completely. Look inside her mother's pudendum. See where it was Ellen came from. Dropping from darkness to light and then to darkness again. Did she know in there that she would have to meet me? It doesn't matter. I can't even remember how we met. It was... no... it must have been in winter on a bridge. I like walking in

winter. It must have been snowing. I always want to die when it snows. Become the sleep of snow. Because snow is futile. It would be nice covering my Black body, the snow. I wonder if Eskimos... yes, surely they must think of dying then too. They must think of it all the time. All that whiteness, all that sleep.

If it snows I will go with the buttons. If it snows I will go. Everything will be pleasant then. But it is August.

Perhaps if I went I could meet a little girl on the street. I would bring her here. Maybe a girl of about twelve or thirteen. Have her stay with me. It would be difficult. But so much less difficult because I cannot speak. Speech always gets in the way. She would come because she likes my eyes. I would get one that does not talk much. Teach her to sew on buttons. They like that. Running away to strange houses with gardens out front and the statue of the goddess.

A girl who has just started having periods. They have a much stronger smell, those young girls. How do I know all this, have I had one before? Yes, I must have, the image seems so warm and familiar to me. The little round stomach and the new hair there. Ellen would be jealous. Ellen would not be jealous. Everything has but two possibilities. Everything is so boring. The little girl would want a radio, though. So she could hear music. It's the way with them. I don't mind music but the news would come on. Word of the outside predatory world. I could not abide that.

Everything is so still when one is not breathing. Raise my head a little to get closer to my heart. I needn't, though. If I just place my hand so... ah yes, I can feel it. Still moving. Such a circuit it must make. Such a great circuit.

It is the twenty-second of August. I feel quite certain of that. Must be careful not to think about it too much or I will cease to believe it. It is three years today that Philip ceased. Philip died today three years ago. There... is that easier to accept? He called me in the evening. I know it was evening because I was sitting here in darkness watching the pretty traffic lights outside. It was when they were green that he called. All green. They were red when I said hello, finally. But they were green again when he said, "I'm going to fly tonight. I'm going to be free." I said, "Oh Philip."

They found him the next day on a highway. Dead from an overdose of something. When others told me, I said he was dead from life. But no one laughed. I laughed.

*I would go out if it snowed
But it will not snow.*

*It is August
It is always August.*

III

The Death of the Heart

Conor fed me today. Giving me what I believe to be soup. He must have heard that my heart had stopped. It was very peculiar the way it did. I was lying here. Upon my favorite bed. Perhaps it is my favorite bed because it is my only bed. I was lying here counting the ribs of my chest in my mind. My thoroughly useless chest. My heart has often stopped before, but not for such long intervals.

Conor looked so absurd in his brown suit. The strange angles that his jacket made from behind. Conor would put on a suit just to come over to see me. He is so frightened of being labeled a bohemian because he's an artist. Strange Conor. I like the way he holds a cigarette, though. Very European. Very quixotic.

Once he told me how he fell to this state. It is amusing. He said he had once worked for several years on a painting. A painting of a woman in utter sadness. Sadness which transcended sadness such that it became ecstasy. In her arms the woman held a child with unclasping, down-facing hands, which connotes death. In the far corner the husband or lover is looking on, uncomprehendingly. Conor finally finished his painting which he says was really painted of blood. Conor's blood. Then Conor found that the same painting had already been done by someone else three years before, with the very same characters. What was worse was that it was the exact same painting, though he swears he had never seen it save in his mind.

"But Conor," I said, "we are in the same hell; why shouldn't we see the same visions?"

He answered, "The same hell, Sorel, but not the same chambers."

"Yes," I said, "the same chambers."

But Conor rarely paints now. Parts of his face are sunken, like the statues of saints in churches that have been eaten away by the kisses of peasants.

A letter was brought to me by Thomas today. I do honestly believe that there was compassion in his eyes. I know no other word for it; you shall have to settle for compassion, as will I. The letter had the date of the twenty-eighth of August underlined. It read as follows:

Dear Mr. Sorel,

I have been informed by Mon Incharge that you have been delinquent by three weeks in your delivery of buttons. It was against my judgement that you were hired. I could see the lack of ambition and

unwholesomeness in your demeanor. It was the general consensus of the others, however, that you were merely strange. It is my duty to inform you now that unless you deliver the said items by 1st of September proximo, you shall no longer be in our employ. Be so advised.

Yours,
Herbert T. Sodom
Acting Vice President of
Spilth Inc.

How unreal the printed word seems. How unreal words seem. How unreal all seems. I would pen the following to him. It should be sufficient.

Dear Sir,

My mind, lung and heart have died. My heart is not yet quite dead, but I am comfortably aware that it too shall soon cease utterly.

Yours in tardiness,
J. Sorel

Thomas was helpful. I am surprised. Thus we both have stepped out of character. My last act of mutability.

IV

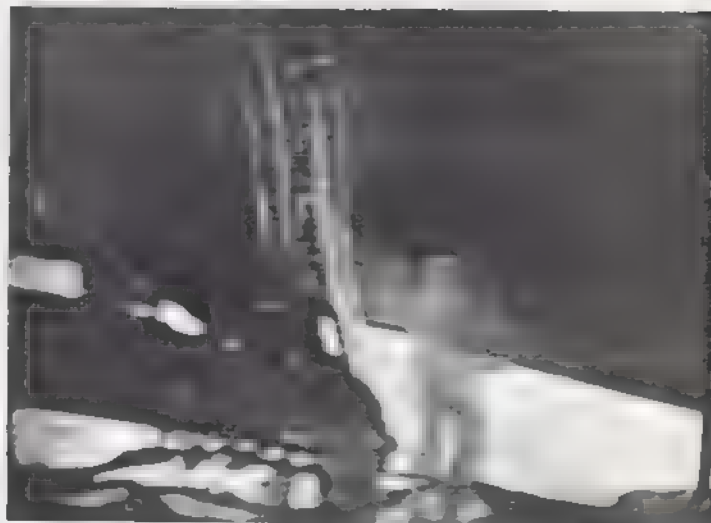
The rain is falling outside tonight I believe it to be rain in any case that dripping outside the busses seem quite lost tonight they seem to be wandering aimlessly I can hear them stopping and going stopping and going like my heart beneath us one black water and above us one blue pointless sky Ellen did not come today she does not come on Thursday but today is Tuesday in any case she did not come the phoenix the ashen bird he will come fanning flames as he does all a cantus firmus a plain any song which will be done before the altar often I have wondered often I have strained my eyes after symbols it is strange that they were not the first to go they are the cause of all my dulcitude the eyes which bring the images before the brain no perhaps it was the brain or the ears that brought the sound of voices when I was young I opened and closed doors I closeted myself between four walls because I was young and had faith that I could keep such in-and such outcorridors filled with Baal-priest and despondent nuns teufeldreck I am alone I am a hypocrite only when one dies one is not a hypocrite I will not be a hypocrite long as Ellen is long as my member is weak her intimate hair her intimate hair each day I live I forget one thing more growing old I will know nothing caesura beat caesura beat...beat...flaccid... all peace...

Atasal.



Apollo 11, atop its giant Saturn V rocket, rises from the launch pad at Cape Kennedy in Florida on July 16th to begin its flight to the moon.

Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong takes his first steps on the surface of the moon after the dramatic touchdown on July 20th.



President Nixon speaks from Washington to Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin on the surface of the moon on July 20th, 1969.

ASSOCIATION MEETING

The 54th annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History will be held from Thursday-Sunday, October 9-12, 1969, at the Tutwiler Hotel, Birmingham, Alabama. Persons interested in proposing sessions or papers should write to the Program Chairman, Walter Fisher, Department of History, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Maryland 21212.



Freedom Has Come, Almost, to Some of Us

Like them now,
Some of us,
In split-level
Bungalows
With wide-spreading
Green-growing lawns;
The boredom,
And tired laughter,
The forced, tight smile.

The pressure jobs
We can't afford to lose
And keep living
The myth.

Freedom has come,
Almost,
To some of us,
With its bag of ulcers,
Heart attacks
And nervous breakdowns.

-- Zack Gilbert.

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Book Review

by RON WELBURN

Black Judgement, by Nikki Giovanni.
Broadside Press, 1968. \$1.00 36pp.

Nikki Giovanni's second volume of poems (her first: *Black Feeling, Black Talk*) has emerged from a wide range of emotional sensitivities and critical projections that concern Black liberation as well as those memories of childhood that "are always a drag/if you're Black."

About half of these poems were written between March and June, 1968, and most of the remaining during the last three months of that year of transition for Black America. Like all Black poets, Nikki had a number of things to say about what was happening in the wasteland during those earlier months. What we have, then, are two distinct moods in this book: poems of war and poems of love. *Black Judgement* is an appropriate title for what the two moods generate, and in some cases the line of demarcation between them fades.

The collection opens and closes with a Black judgement, both quite clearly stated. The opener includes a "fuck tokenism" and the last is dedicated to the progressive pro-creative revolutionary for "bullshit niggerish ways."

But this Black sister is at her poetic best when she relates the observations that only a Black woman can take the time to understand and intuitively appreciate. This does not mean that she fails in her poetry when outraged; but there is a sensitive brilliance that stands out when her creations are the feelings which initially gave impetus to her total span of judgements. In "Nikki-Rossa" she presents a remembrance approaching the same degree of sensitivity and empathy as Black Poet Laureate, Gwendolyn Brooks:

and though you're poor it isn't

poverty that concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that
makes any difference
but only that everybody is together
and you
and your sister have happy birthdays
and very good christmases
and I really hope no white person
ever has cause to write about me
because they never understand
Black love is Black wealth
and they'll
probably talk about my hard child-
hood and never understand that
all the while I was quite happy

As for style, Nikki uses a spiraling, winding, almost exhaustless phrasing, particularly when she reaches a full head of steam in the middle of a poem. This phrasing has its own rhythm, but it is not necessarily musical in itself. "Revolutionary Music" happens to be one that sustains the tumbling effect throughout:

not to mention
doing a whole
song they can't even snap
their fingers to
"good god! ugh!"
talking about
"i got the feeling baby i got the
feeling"
and "hey everybody let me tell you
the news"
martha and the vandellas dancing in
the streets
while shorty long is functioning at
that junction
yeah we hip to that
aretha said they better
think

The self-contained rhythm possesses the combined straight-out and overlapping cadences of fast rapping. In the more sentimentally toned poems, the rhythm is obvious but subdued.

It is with style that Black poets make their presence and power felt. Although no two styles tend to be exactly the same, the idiom remains in the Afro experience. Style needn't be an elegant academic concern.

No Black poet, or more likely, poetess, from Lucy Terry to Nikki Giovanni herself is yet ready for the archives. And a close and very careful (as well as sympathetic) assessment of many of us who write poetry might, in all truth and with malice toward none, relegate a great deal of our much lauded material to the refuse pile. All this will occur when a true Black ethos in poetry stands as the continuum toward the fine art of ritual: Black musical energy, rhythmic impulses, and heightened sensibilities. Our manner of composing poetry should be examined and evaluated in order that we might examine and evaluate ourselves and thus lead to the further re-creation of ourselves by means of a collective energy. Just as in the new jazz music, the real "revolutionary music" if you will. As Albert Ayler has said, "It's not about notes anymore, it's about feelings." But it's sound, too, whose cadences justify the feelings. With such great interest in "oldies but goodies," the old dances can be used in poetry by taking the Uncle Willie or the Crossfire or the latest Hutch (which might be outmoded already) and putting words to the motions themselves, to the motions as expressed as a kind of cadence.

Nikki Giovanni is apparently moving toward this sense of the cadence as it comes forth from Black feeling. And though she was also moving from mere talk to judgements in this volume, the germ of a refreshing poetic rhetoric that can supplant an already tumbling, running style should not be neglected for too long, if that is at all possible in these pressing times. Black Judgements may be the overall gesture by those of us who are perhaps conscientious, but where are we going because of some "bullshit niggerish ways" in 1969?

by CLAYTON RILEY

"The Mexican Government needs to sue."

Ah, Brothers... we seek out levels of darkness, seek them deliberately. We stumble in the shadow market, having paid premium prices for the privilege -- this three-dollar Sunday shrine, the first-run movie house (half a day's ride (?) from the old Alhambra, the Regun, the West End; movin' pitcha houses uptown, shoot-em-up Taj Mahals of the New World where so many urban buckaroos were weaned on gunsmoke and horseshit... indeed, bullshit epics for our times).

We are children once more screaming death chants in the balcony to the amusement of fat men in the ticket booths, the projection rooms; underfed knock-kneed niggers calling for blood and new assassinations, more specifically the plentiful murder of Indians and the liberating bandits of Mexico...

Downtown to the temples of many-splendored magic money vendor stations where spooks of all varieties are allowed to tread freely without noticeable interference.

Where you wanna sit, Baby?

And new flicks are leaping at you with furious and consuming baths of color...freaked-out windowpanes spreading all around... like Big Time Charlie (who runs the world from a large office in the Pentagon) had gone to nutville making movie screens bigger/wider/longer, spreading out like crystal wraparound indoor windshields.

Brothers be seated...if you please.

Big-time spenders from the Mount Morris Park area, digging on the ritual, sinking into cushions...tensed up for the action sweepstakes.

My cousin Billy says this is a bad motherfucker, best cowboy flick

he ever seen.

That's cool, we'll go for that.

The flick begins. Whitey riding tall, sharp as he wants to be with great lighting and inspired cinematography. Riding casually into everybody's life...tough as the seats in the old Sunset (before it became a gospel palace), the old ranch house movie theaters from way back...here comes Charlie riding in his new vehicle for EVER'BODY...yeah! Director Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*. HMMMMMMMM-umh!

A primer, instruction manual, the Weekly Reader come to life, National Scholastic magazine with saddle sores; all of the nation's vaunted/fabled educational processes giving way, giving up to an ocean of bleeding sharpshooters, bounty hunters, stockade refugees...bullets bursting through flesh and western costumes, showering red red streams, splashing life all over us.

EVERYBODY DIES ... KILL 'EM ALL!

Good old Sam Peckinpah. He made *Ride the High Country* (1961, remember Joel McCrea, holding his guts, turning to take one last look at green and beautiful hills before he died?). And I imagined for myself a commitment to Peckinpah's genius. And he was. Now, with this monstrous film, filled with the terms and form of killing for the pleasure of killing, filled with cheap and stolen gimmicks (death in slow-motion is no more/no less ugly, and Kurosawa did it better anyway -- more economically as well in the *Magnificent Seven*)... now, with his head buried in the Hollywood sand, Peckinpah has become no more/no

less than just a man, and, we are in his debt for that revelation.

We are no longer children but men seated here before a chilling parade of corpses thumping into dust, into grassy plains and all other places, and most of us gathered here are cheering all that dying, not recognizing -- in the midst of rich Black laughter from three-dollar seats -- just what Brother David Nelson, a Last Poet, means by saying "Niggas love dyin'...been dyin' for 400 years."

Brothers cheering, bodies collapsing. Brother screams, *They'll have to go some to top this one!*

Not far. Harlem will do and that is never far away. Watts will be fine for just this sort of thing. Detroit, Philly...wherever you live, Brother.

Go on and laugh at all those gaping red roses in all those chests, cheer for a prelude of what can be yours -- cheap. No money down. Free in some towns.

Cheer/chuckle at the most racist depiction of the Mexican people to appear on any screen in twenty years.

Ha... Greeeeen-go ...you lookin' for dee rrrrifles, no?

All yellow teeth and greasy hair in Peckinpah's eyes...all incredibly stupid and lazy. The Mexican Government needs to sue. Needs that almost as much as America needs Chavez and Tijerina.

And you cheering, creaming Brothers, ripe for shotguns and spilled entrails, you need intense guidance and regular counseling.

Power to the people...yes! But life. Let's stop practicing how to die -- that's far too easy. Living is what's happening. Let's dig on that.

Letters to the Editor

Birth Control

Dear Mr. Watts:

We are Africans, not Afro-American, Black, or negro. If the Italian here in America can call himself Italian and not Italian-American, the Frenchman can call himself French and not French-American, then we also are African and not Afro-American.

As for birth control, in the white man's papers, in his Gallup Poll and all his other polls, he keeps telling us that we're only eleven percent of the population. Then surely we don't need no birth control. I think being that the white man is something like eighty percent of the population then I would say that he needs birth control. But he has defined his reasons for birth control in his definition of Genocide.

The white man says that all of this is for the purpose of extermination, and we are being exterminated in so many different forms and fashions of trickology it's pathetic -- check the jails, check the murder rate of the police against Blacks, the deaths in the so-called ghettos, deaths in Vietnam of the Black soldiers.

If I sound bitter, then this is the way the system allows me to express myself and I'm supposed to be bitter. Just stop and think a minute: what value are we to this country? We are uneducated, so I would say that we are in the way of the poor whites' progress. Looking at it from the white man's side, it makes sense to him to get us out of the way in some form, so he chooses Genocide.

Robert L. Gordon, Jr.
Chicago, Ill.

Incident at Cornell

Dear Sir:

As a student, and one who is concerned with academic freedom on the nation's campuses, I protest the Black insurgency at Cornell University.

I would be the first to agree that Black students at Cornell did in fact have a grievance. I do not agree, however, with the way these students carried out their demands. We are

reaching an all-time low when we attempt to voice our disapproval with the use of a firearm.

I am of the conviction that demonstrations and their aftermath can only be injurious to the nation, state and city in which they occur. One only has to observe the political outcome of the Cornell disgrace to prove this point.

Immediately following the Cornell riots, the New York State Legislature passed a bill that would revoke tuition aid for any student involved in future uprisings. In essence, the Cornell fiasco merely gave conservative politicians an excuse to clamp down on the state's colleges and universities.

Jack Williams
Rochester, N.Y.

Arrogant Whites

To the Editor:

I subscribed to the *LIBERATOR* in order to learn what the editor and contributors could teach me about the struggle of negroes (*sic*) for their just rights and, perhaps, what we who are not negroes (*sic*) could do constructively to make this a healthier atmosphere in which all of us could live.

It seems to me that I cannot help the cause of goodwill among people from what I have read in *LIBERATOR*. I am aware that much of which was expressed I could not inwardly feel and this is my deficiency. But so much was unconstructive vituperation that I could not look forward to enlightenment. Sorry.

Sebastian E. Littauer
Columbia University, N.Y.C.

The Editor replies:

Thanks for your candid reasons for not renewing your subscription to *LIBERATOR*. Unlike many other white subscribers who flee in silent horror from the magazine, you at least have had the guts to express your feelings.

One word and I shall be done: *LIBERATOR* was set up by me 10 years ago as a public forum for the Black Community to express and ex-

change thoughts and ideas and programs. At no point have I or my associates considered turning *LIBERATOR* into a magazine for the "enlightenment" or entertainment of whites.

Black Ideology

Dear Sir:

In the article "Black Ideology and the Search for Community" (*LIBERATOR*, June 1969), Robert E. Staples discusses many important issues which confront Black people and which I believe should be discussed further. However, there is one area which I feel Mr. Staples could have explored more fully -- the area of dialectics.

Howard Brown
New York City

It Ain't Necessarily So

Dear Sir:

Mr. Searles ("It Ain't Necessarily So," *LIBERATOR*, July 1969) reveals his American way of thinking by assuming that Africans are united. Africans are not united, and he should be aware of this fact. All native-born Africans do not think that they have the same culture, just as all native-born Europeans do not claim they have the same culture. Afro-Americans who settled in Liberia made a point of very emphatically telling the native-born Africans that they were different. And an Ethiopian officer who participated in the attempt to end the conflict in the Congo said that he almost lost his life when he approached a Congolese with the attitude that because they were the same color and born in Africa they had something in common.

Afro-Americans who return to Africa will have to abide by the laws of the African nations. They cannot go to these countries and expect to be able to tell African leaders what to do. (Ask the Black Panthers how effective this latter technique is. They were simple enough to think that they could go to Cuba and tell Castro what to do!)

DeCourcy Edwards
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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